Mental Health across the Educational Continuum: The Imperative for Change

Stuart Slavin, MD, MEd
Senior Scholar for Well-being
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)
Disclosures

I have no financial disclosures to make.
The Health Care Setting

A Grim Picture
The Health Care Setting

A Grim Picture

Medical students
Depression rate 27%
Anxiety and burnout in more than half
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  Anxiety and burnout in more than half
Residents
  Burnout rate 60-75% and higher

A Grim Picture
The Health Care Setting

A Grim Picture

Medical students
  Depression rate 27%
  Anxiety and burnout in more than half
Residents
  Burnout rate 60-75% and higher
Physicians
  Burnout rate 54% and rising
  Highest suicide rate of any profession
Moderate- Severe Symptoms of Depression (% of class)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of 2011</th>
<th>Orient.</th>
<th>MS1 (EOY)</th>
<th>MS2 (EOY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2011</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
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<td>35</td>
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## Saint Louis University Medical Student Mental Health

### Moderate- Severe Symptoms of Anxiety (% of class)

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A Simple Model
A Simple Model

Reduce unnecessary stressors and enhance the learning environment
A Simple Model

Reduce unnecessary stressors and enhance the learning environment

Increase students’ ability to deal with stress
A Simple Model

Reduce unnecessary stressors and enhance the learning environment

Increase students’ ability to deal with stress

Help students find meaning in their work
The Interventions
2009- Pass/ Fail grading in 1st two years, cut curriculum by 10%, instituted longitudinal electives and theme-based learning communities
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2013- Restructured the four year curriculum to allow early start and end to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} year
2014- Confidential tracking of depression and anxiety
2015- Focused support of 2\textsuperscript{nd} years in run-up to Step 1
## Mental Health Impact

### Moderate- Severe Symptoms of Depression (% of class)

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<td>35</td>
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<td>Class of 2018</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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# Mental Health Impact

## Moderate- Severe Symptoms of Anxiety (% of class)

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<td>Class of 2018</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
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External Bench-Marking

AAMC
Year 2
Questionnaire
## AAMC Year 2 Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Climate</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>SLU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-fac. interaction</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived stress</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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SLU students report getting $\frac{1}{2}$ hour more of sleep per night and spending $1 \frac{1}{2}$ hour less time in class or studying per day than the average medical student.
But what happened to academic performance???
### USMLE Step 1 performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Failure rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Classes of 2011 and 2012</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of 2018</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>2%</td>
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How could this happen???
The Yerkes-Dodson Curve

Performance vs. Stress level

- Peak performance
- Healthy
  - Focused
  - Motivated
  - Healthy tension
  - Optimum stress
- Inactive & bored

- Sick
  - Fatigued
  - Exhaustion
  - Panic
  - Anxiety
  - Anger
  - Burn-out & breakdown

Disease
Reflections and Recommendations
Program and Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities
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Must provide a professional, respectful, and civil environment that is free from mistreatment, abuse, or coercion of students, residents, faculty, and staff.
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Must include efforts to enhance the meaning that each resident finds in the experience of being a physician, including protecting time with patients, minimizing non-physician obligations, providing administrative support, promoting progressive autonomy and flexibility, and enhancing professional relationships.
Reflections and Recommendations

We need to develop a deep understanding of the lived experience of those we are trying to help.
Reflections and Recommendations

The lived experience is not shaped only by the environment.
Other Drivers of Poor Mental Health
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Problematic Mindsets
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Comparison
Problematic Mindsets

Comparison
Seeing performance as identity
Problematic Mindsets

Comparison
Seeing performance as identity
Personalization and self-blame
Problematic Mindsets

Comparison
Seeing performance as identity
Personalization and self-blame
Feelings of inadequacy, embarrassment, and shame
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Chasing success
Problematic Mindsets

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Chasing success
Stigma around seeking care for mental health problems
How to Address the Mindsets
How to Address the Mindsets

Cognitive behavioral techniques and other tools
Reflections and Recommendations

Resilience curricula need to be modest in scope and duration.
Reflections and Recommendations

Resilience curricula need to be modest in scope and duration.

They need to be invitational rather than prescriptive.
Resilience toolbox
  - Mindfulness and metacognition
  - Cognitive restructuring
  - Cultivating positive emotions
  - Combating negative bias
  - Cultivating optimism
  - Emotional self-regulation
  - Dealing with difficult people
  - Investing in well-being
  - Avoiding learned helplessness
Reflections and Recommendations

We were not as successful in the clerkship year.
Reflections and Recommendations

In the clinical years, we need to work on enhancing the well-being of faculty and residents.
Reflections and Recommendations

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Resident well-being is unlikely to improve if faculty well-being doesn’t.
Program and Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities

Must provide a professional, respectful, and civil environment that is free from mistreatment, abuse, or coercion of students, residents, faculty, and staff.

Must include efforts to enhance the meaning that each resident finds in the experience of being a physician, including protecting time with patients, minimizing non-physician obligations, providing administrative support, promoting progressive autonomy and flexibility, and enhancing professional relationships.
Improving the Clinical Work Environment

Drivers of Burnout
- Workload
- Rewards
- Control
- Community
- Fairness
- Values

Maslach and Leiter, 1997
Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they’ll take care of the clients.

Richard Branson
Beyond Curriculum to Culture
Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Office of the Dean for Curricular Affairs on accessibility, awareness of student concerns, and responsiveness to student problems. (5-point Likert scale from very satisfied to very dissatisfied)
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(5-point Likert scale from very satisfied to very dissatisfied)

Nationally- 32.8% very satisfied
SLU- 76.1% very satisfied
Beyond Curriculum to Culture

AAMC Graduation Questionnaire

Satisfaction with programs/activities that promote effective stress management, a balanced lifestyle, and overall well-being.
Satisfaction with programs/activities that promote effective stress management, a balanced lifestyle, and overall well-being.

Nationally- 33.3% very satisfied  
SLU- 81.2% very satisfied
If we take man as he is, we make him worse, but if we take man as he should be, we make him capable of becoming what he can be.

Viktor Frankl
Agreement with statement “My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a person.”
(5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)
Agreement with statement “My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a person.”

(5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Nationally- 33.8% strongly agree
SLU- 65.0% strongly agree
The Importance of Meaning
Viktor Frankl
There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one’s life.
There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one’s life.

There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche, “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.”